



Fairbridge Gazette

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DECEMBER, 1983

FROM THE PRESIDENT:

YOUR EXECUTIVE REPORTS PROGRESS ON TASKS FROM THE GENERAL MEETING

The Executive elected at the General Meeting during the reunion was given a strong sense on issues members want resolved. Top on the list was a call for personal files to be returned.

We're following up on this one. Don Morton will call in on the London office this winter while he's visiting England. Also, you can read elsewhere in the news that Erica Tassell brought the matter up for us at the Society's AGM.

Another matter was the status of the Alumni Association which had been incorporated provincially but the membership had lapsed. Tom Speed is working on the constitution and checking into registration.

Fairbridge historical records, our memorabilia, was another concern. Possible sites now include the North Cowichan museum, or the provincial museum in Victoria. There's a lot of benefit to be gained from locating the films, pictures, pamphlets and so on in one central spot. At present, the memorabilia is spread far and wide, but with one location it will be possible for you to visit and enjoy the materials.

The Executive, which has met twice since the reunion, approved a plaque for presentation to the Fairbridge Strata Society to thank them for their hospitality—who will ever forget the lovely reception, tea, and cakes? The plaque will also provide a historical record of our return to the school.

Finally, let me say that I'm pleased to be a member of this hard working group and I'm most appreciative of their efforts to continue the spirit of the Association as expressed at the reunion. We are building on the excellent start made last August.

My best wishes to all of you.

John Cowans - President

REUNION '83 RECAP

It would be an understatement if we were only to say that the 1983 Old Fairbridgians' Reunion was a success.

It certainly was that, but much, much more as well. Not only was it a school reunion, it was also a coming together again of long-separated family members.

For each Old Fairbridgian, the reunion provided so many individual and personal moments of nostalgia and emotion that it is difficult to know where to start and how to proceed with comments that would do full justice to the event.

Obviously, the Registration/Wine and Cheese Party provided an excellent start. Everyone was mingling, and perhaps a hundred different stories could be written about that specific aspect. Certainly the joy (and a few tears) were evident - wish we could have captured some of the comments on tape!

For some, perhaps the highlight was the meeting of that special pal they had often thought about, and the sudden instant flashback to shared experiences of some 35 or 45 years ago. For others, it could have been the emotional experience of treading the same ground where they grew up, or seeing with some sadness that old moss-covered cottage, or the familiar natural beauty of the surroundings.

That big old maple tree by "H" cottage is still there - sure wouldn't try climbing it now, but at one time we could literally fly up and down that old tree. Knew exactly which branch to place our feet on for the fastest route.

Perhaps the most lasting aspect of the reunion was the evident spirit and will amongst the Old Fairbridgians to renew and support the O.F. Association so that the lost threads of their beginnings at Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School be gathered together and not left in a scattered state. Obviously, we were a significant part of the history of Fairbridge and the Cowichan Valley. The school and the new environment had a dramatic impact on our own personal lives, and it became clear that we had an obligation to collect, record and centralize whatever historical material we could find.

As we said earlier, the reunion provided individual and personal highlights. Some that we observed and which we think worth mentioning (in random order - just as they come to mind):

- the delight of the cottage mothers and staff and our delight at seeing them;
- the wonderful, wonderful gesture of the current residents of the former Fairbridge property who put on such a warm welcome and splendid tea party for us;
- Ron Hancock and Bill Cockburn and their impromptu duet in the chapel - very poignant;
- that old (former that is) girlfriend - no names, no pack drill;
- John Hardy's dissertation on "remember when" and Geordie White's plaintive cry, "I wanna gae hame" when John mentioned cod liver oil -- it brought the house down;
- nice to see Art and Marie Harrop from Fintry, and Mrs. Elizabeth Beguin - a former Cottage Mother from Australia;
- how happy and radiant Molly Harris was to see such a successful "do", and how the Old Fairbridgians thanked her for her efforts. Good job Molly - we are really indebted to you!
- Alf Lincoln's delightful movies of early Fairbridge - just magnificent Alf, thank you very much for such a vivid look at our early history

- teeth marks on the back of the pews in the chapel - seems the pews were just the wrong height for a (nameless) restless youngster kneeling at prayer;
- the playing field - forlorn now, but it brought back memories of sports days, conkers, soccer, etc., etc;
- Mrs. Langtry and daughter, Kerry - a howe away from home up the tracks;
- all those old pictures - and the fact that none of us has aged. (place tongue in cheek here).
- how tidy and neat the cairn explaining Fairbridge was. A great job of painting and cleaning - much appreciation to Fred Mills.

Molly has received many, many phone calls and letters saying how much the O.F.'s enjoyed the reunion, and we thank you for those kind thoughts. We can say truly that it was a "labour of love" and we are very happy that the reunion was successful.

LIST OF OLD FAIRBRIDGIANS

Updated list of Old Fairbridgiens' names and addresses will be completed shortly. We plan to maintain this in a computerized format so as to facilitate up-dating and mailing processes. In this regard, don't forget to let us know when/if you change your address - we sure don't want to lose each other again now do we!

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEES

You will recall that the General Meeting passed a motion that Membership Fees for the Old Fairbridgiens Association be struck at \$10.00 per calendar year so that we can proceed with the plans and direction given to us at the General Meeting e.g., commemorative book; personal records; centralize memorabilia etc.

The Annual Fee is now due, and for those of you who have not yet paid, we ask your kind and immediate attention to sending in your payment now.

(Please don't wait - do it now - OK! Otherwise it becomes a drag for you and us if we have to keep bugging you. - Thanks). Send fees to Molly Harris address shown elsewhere in this issue. N.B. This fee is good until 31 December 1984.

Enclosed are my fees for the Old Fairbridgiens Association for the calendar year 1984 - \$10.00.

(please print)
 NAME _____
 Address _____
 (include postal code)

 Tel. No. _____
 (include area code)

WE WERE REPRESENTED AT THE LONDON ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Former staff member Erica Tassell writes to Molly, October 13, 1983 that she went to the AGM of the Fairbridge Society in London, England October 12. "I have tried to go most years," she says, "and felt my special responsibility has been to remind them of their responsibilities to O.F.s in Canada...Armed with your letter, I gave them an idea of what you and your committee had done organizing the list of addresses, planning the reunion, the reunion itself, and the welcome from Fairbridge Strata. They were all pleased to hear how successful it had all been, and sent you the good wishes of the London committee now that you have got a proper Old Fairbridgians Association going."

Erica reports she brought up the matter of our files, and the chairman, Lady Dodds Parker herself will look into the matter. Thankyou Erica!

CAROLS AT THE CHAPEL...The Fairbridge Strata Society plans to open the chapel for carols this Christmas, and invites any Fairbridgians in the area to attend. December 17, at 7:30 pm. If you think the reunion was an emotional event, consider singing carols in the Fairbridge chapel again!

FAIRBRIDGE GAZETTE REVISITED

The Executive has taken the liberty of reviving the name "Fairbridge Gazette" in honour of the original publication and of the people who nurtured it while the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School was still going strong. (Periodically we will publish excerpts from the original Gazettes for your interest).

It is intended that the Gazette be a useful means of communication of information and ideas between all members of the Old Fairbridgians Association. As such, members are invited to contribute any articles they wish, whether questions, opinions, general interest items or just to stay in touch.

While we are on this topic of communication, would all readers please note that ALL correspondence, whether for the Gazette or for the Association, should be addressed to:

*Mrs. Molly Harris,
Corresponding Secretary,
Old Fairbridgians Association,
2143 William Street,
Vancouver, B.C.
V5L 2S2.*